

Chapter 2.3 MONITORING STRATEGY REVISION PROCESS and TIMELINES

In 1997, DEQ formed a Water Quality Monitoring (WQM) Taskforce in response to EPA suggestions and new water quality monitoring requirements enacted by the Virginia General Assembly. The Taskforce objectives were to evaluate, complement, integrate, and define the direction of the various components of the agency's WQM Program. The Taskforce attained its objectives in mid-1999 by creating a document to describe its integrated WQM Program Strategy and submitted draft copies of the document to upper DEQ administration and subsequently to EPA at the end of that year. Following a series of meetings with, and presentations to, national and regional EPA representatives, a WQM Academic Advisory Committee and an independently appointed DEQ Scientific Advisory Committee, the agency adapted the original strategy to incorporate suggestions from the reviewing bodies during 2000 and 2001.

In 2002, the Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Administrators (ASIWPCA), in conjunction with the EPA Office of Water, circulated a draft document describing the ten essential elements of a state water quality monitoring program. The EPA published the final form of this document as "Elements of a State Water Monitoring and Assessment Program" (EPA 841-B-03-003, available from the EPA webpage at <http://www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/repguid.html>) in March of 2003. During this same time interval, DEQ began to evaluate its existing WQM strategy, simplifying the format of the original document, updating and revising the strategy to include adaptations in program structure and monitoring methods that had evolved during the preceding four years, and to ensure that all ten of the essential elements described by EPA were adequately addressed and incorporated into the strategy.

In brief, the ten essential elements required were enumerated as follows:

1. Program Strategy (to include the following nine elements)
2. Monitoring Objectives (purpose)
3. Monitoring Design (site selection, etc.)
4. Core and Supplemental Water Quality Indicators (parameter list)
5. Quality Assurance measures (citations of Quality Assurance Project Plans, etc.; what QA measures, who is responsible, frequency, reporting requirements, etc.)
6. Data Management description (database, data entry, public access, etc.)
7. Data Analysis / Assessment description (305(b) or other; methodology, who is responsible, frequency, reporting requirements, etc.)
8. Reporting requirements (305(b) or other? Who is responsible, frequency, etc.?)
9. Periodic Review of Program (who is responsible - internal and/or external review, frequency, follow-up requirements/activities, etc.)
10. General Support and Infrastructure (funding, staff, training, laboratory resources, forthcoming improvements, etc.)

Once EPA adopted their final guidance document, the DEQ monitoring coordinator began carrying out the initial phase of this process, editing and reformatting the original document. Sections concerning the various subprograms were subsequently circulated to the coordinators/managers of those specific monitoring activities for review during the second calendar quarter of 2003. After all sections had been returned and reunited, a copy of the entire draft document was circulated to DEQ Office of Water Quality Programs administrators, the DEQ Central Office's WQM coordination group, and to DEQ Regional Office Monitoring and Assessment Coordinators in late 2003. Comments were requested by mid-January of 2004.

All pertinent comments were integrated into the draft strategy document, and DEQ workgroups were established to address the specific gaps that had been identified. Copies of the consequent draft strategy were sent to EPA for their comments in March 2004. In mid-April of that year a DEQ WQM team delivered an oral presentation of the draft strategy to EPA regional and national representatives. EPA comments and suggestions were subsequently reviewed and incorporated by June 2004, after which a final draft strategy document was presented to DEQ Executive Management. Managerial comments and suggestions were incorporated and the final revised WQM Strategy was posted on DEQ's WebPages for a 30-day public comment period beginning in early August. Since no significant changes were required following public comment, the same draft was submitted to EPA in late September of 2004. EPA had no further comments and informed DEQ in mid-November that its "Millennium 2000 Water Quality Monitoring

Strategy” was considered acceptable as submitted. The 2004 edition of the strategy was officially instituted in January of 2005, although implementation of various aspects had begun as early as the 2000 Monitoring Year.

DEQ's Water Quality Monitoring Program has continued to adapt and evolve, in response to newly emerging environmental challenges as well as to incorporate new monitoring technologies and analytical methods. A draft revised edition of the “Strategy” document, incorporating several new monitoring activities, and a few minor technical adaptations and scheduling changes in the WQM Program, was completed and submitted for EPA and public review in March of 2006. Few public comments were received and EPA accepted the revised Strategy as submitted. The definitive 2007 edition of DEQ's Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Strategy was posted on the Agency's WebPages (<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/watermonitoring/monstrat.html>) in early May of 2007. Periodic reviews and the necessary revisions, followed by new editions of the Strategy document, are planned at six-year intervals hereafter, in synchronization with the planned rotational cycles of various monitoring activities.